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# Farm Broadcasters Letter



Letter No. 2197

January 24, 1985

SALES TO  
USSR  
CANCELLED

Private exporters reported to the U.S. Department of Agriculture the cancellation of export sales of 100,000 metric tons of hard red winter wheat for delivery to the USSR during the 1984-85 marketing year and under the second year of the Long Term Grain Supply Agreement. Sales of wheat and corn to the USSR for delivery during the second year of the Agreement now total 14,351,100 tons, of which wheat is 3,277,000 tons and corn is 11,074,100 tons.

WHO HAS  
SEEN THE  
WIND?

Wind erosion damaged more land in the Great Plains in the last two months of 1984 than during any comparable period since the mid-1950s, according to the U.S. Department of Agriculture. Reports from the 10-state area indicate wind damage on more than 3 million acres during Nov. and Dec. 1984, compared with about 800,000 acres in Nov. and Dec. 1983. Windblown soil particles destroyed crops or cover on 106,000 acres of land not damaged. According to Peter Myers, Chief of USDA's Soil Conservation Service, "We're off to a very bad start this season... Last year was the third worst wind erosion year in the 50 years we've been keeping records in the region."

SURPLUS DAIRY  
PRODUCTS  
TO IRAQ

Sec'y of Agriculture John Block announced the sale of 12,000 metric tons of butteroil valued at \$11.8 million to Iraq. The Commodity Credit Corporation sold the milk for \$650 per ton, and the butteroil for \$1,562 per ton. These prices are in line with recent sales of dairy products by other exporters. The sale provides for payment in U.S. dollars over three years with commercial interest rates charged semi-annually on the unpaid balance.

1984-CROP WHEAT  
CAN GO IN  
RESERVE

"Wheat producers with maturing 1984-crop regular loans may place their crop in the farmer-owned reserve," according to Sec'y of Agriculture John Block. "Current provisions--a storage rate of \$.265 per bushel and no reserve minimum--will apply," he said. Farmers will not be permitted to convert existing and maturing wheat reserve loans into the current Wheat Reserve VI. The trigger release level will be \$4.45 per bushel, the same as for the 1983 crop. Producers should contact their country ASCS offices for further details.

CHINA  
MARCHING  
AHEAD

Between 1949 and 1982, China's population nearly doubled, from 542 million to more than a billion people. In the same period, grain production more than tripled. China is now less dependent on imports than it was just a short time ago. Near the end of 1984, analysts of the U.S. Department of Agriculture noted that China would not meet its obligations under the long-term trade agreement to purchase and ship a minimum of 8.2 million tons of U.S. grain by year's end.

GRAIN SALES  
TO AFRICA

The U.S. Department of Agriculture on Jan. 23 announced the names of six successful bidders in the sale of \$66.7 million worth of wheat, corn and rough rice to private exporters for resale to nine African countries hard-hit by severe drought.

PRIME  
FARMLAND

Prime farmland is our best farmland. It produces high crop yields with the least damage to the soil. Of 3 million acres of rural land lost to agriculture each year, about one million acres are prime farmland, according to the U.S. Department of Agriculture. At current rates of land loss, Florida, New Hampshire and Rhode Island will lose nearly all their prime farmland by the turn of the century. Prime farmland in each region is as follows: Pacific, over 12 million acres...Mountain region, nearly 9½ million...Northern Plains, 60½ million acres...Southern Plains, over 53 million...Lake States, over 38 million...Corn Belt, 81 million...Delta States, nearly 33 million...Northeast, over 13½ million...Appalachian region, nearly 23 million...and the Southeast, 20½ million acres are prime farmland.

COWS DOING  
VERY WELL

Milk production during Dec. 1984 totaled 11 billion pounds (5 million metric tons), 3 pct. less than Dec. 1983, according to the U.S. Department of Agriculture. Accumulated milk production for the year 1984 totaled 136 billion pounds (61.7 million metric tons), down 3 pct. from 1983. The industrious cows averaged 1,019 pounds per cow during Dec., 3 pounds below Dec. 1983. The total number of milk cows in herds averaged 10.8 million head during Dec., 3 pct. below Dec. 1983. (For more information, call 202-447-6351.)

WEST WON'T  
DRY OUT

Normal to above normal rain and snow in the West during the fall and early winter should produce abundant water supplies for the entire region this summer, according to the U.S. Departments of Agriculture and Commerce. All river basins in the West are expected to produce normal to above normal flows this spring, assuming that spring precipitation will be normal. The only areas where below normal runoff is expected are central Arizona and portions of Wyoming. Runoff is expected to be above normal in the Idaho panhandle and western Montana after three seasons of below normal runoff.

CALIF. COUNTIES  
FOR EMERGENCY  
LOANS

Sec'y of Agriculture John Block named Los Angeles County, Calif., and four contiguous counties as eligible for Farmers Home Admin. emergency loans because of losses due to severe drought. Farmers in the five counties have 8 months in which to apply for loans to cover part of their actual losses.

TIMBER  
PURCHASE  
CHANGES

The period for public comment on proposed changes in the way the Forest Service of the U.S. Department of Agriculture makes timber available for purchase by small business firms has been extended until Feb. 8, 1985. Information on the proposed changes may be obtained from Dave Spores, Forest Service, USDA, P.O. Box 2417, Washington, D.C. 20013 or by calling 202-447-4051. You may also address comments to R. Max Peterson, Chief, Forest Service, at the same address.

CATFISH  
PROCESSING

The domestic production of farm-raised catfish during Dec. totaled 11 million pounds (5010 metric tons) round weight, according to the U.S. Department of Agriculture. The Dec. average price paid to growers was 65 cents per pound, 4 cents above Dec. 1983.

FROM OUR TELEVISION  
SERVICE

"Wind Erosion Update" ... Keith Schmude, Soil Conservation Serv., talks about factors contributing to the increase in wind erosion damage in the Great Plains. DeBoria Janifer interviews. (301)

"Western Water Outlook" ... Keith Schmude, Soil Conservation Serv., discusses the forecast for water supplies in the West and factors contributing to this large supply. DeBoria Janifer interviews. (302)

"Dairy Diversion Program" ... The Dairy Diversion Program is scheduled to end on March 31. USDA economist Cliff Carman comments on this program. Vic Powell interviews. (303)

"Dairy Diversion Program - II" ... USDA economist Cliff Carman continues his discussion on the dairy diversion program and the impact the closure of this program will have on milk producers. Vic Powell interviews. (304)

"1985 World Corn Outlook" ... 1985 promises to be a mixed year for U.S. exports of corn and other coarse grains. USDA analyst Nicholas Thuroczy talks about factors contributing to this outlook. Jim Johnson interviews. (305)

KEEPING  
CHICKENS  
HEALTHY

Members of the National Poultry Improvement Plan, which operates under regulations of the U.S. Department of Agriculture, propose to update procedures for controlling poultry diseases. Public comments will be accepted until March 19. The plan provides a mechanism for controlling diseases by identifying flocks, hatcheries and dealers that meet certain disease control standards. Poultry producers are thus provided with sources of birds that are certified "clean" of certain diseases. Details of the proposal are in the Jan. 18 Federal Register. Address comments to: Thomas Gessel, APHIS, USDA, 728 Federal Building, Hyattsville, Md. 20782.

WORLD  
TOBACCO  
SITUATION

U.S. unmanufactured tobacco exports were strong in Nov. 1984, with 44,654 tons valued at \$267 million exported, according to the U.S. Department of Agriculture. This was an 11 pct. increase from Nov. 1983. Japan, Egypt and West Germany were the leading markets. Flue-cured tobacco accounted for 74 pct. of Nov. exports. For the Jan.-Nov. period, exports were about the same level as a year ago, with 221,011 tons valued at \$1.3 billion exported. U.S. unmanufactured imports for consumption for Nov. 1984 were 17,929 tons valued at \$54 million near Nov. 1983 levels. Cumulative imports for Jan.-Nov. 1984 were 176,703 tons valued at \$523 million, down 23 pct. from Jan.-Nov. '83.

1985 SUGAR  
IMPORT QUOTAS

The preliminary U.S. Customs Service data show sugar imports under quota for the fifteenth week of the 1985 quota year ending Jan. 11, 1985, were 38,774 short tons, according to the U.S. Department of Agriculture. Cumulative 1985 imports under quota for the Oct. 1 - Jan. 11 period totaled 700,612 short tons. This compares with cumulative quota imports for the corresponding period last year of 848,844 short tons. The base quota for the 1985 quota year is 2.55 million short tons.

EMERGENCY LOANS  
FOR MISSOURI

Sec'y of Agriculture John R. Block named 50 counties in Missouri as eligible for Farmers Home Administration emergency loans because of losses due to unfavorable weather. Forty-four are primary counties, and 6 are contiguous. Farmers in those counties have eight months in which to apply for the loans to cover part of their actual losses.



OFF MIKE

By the time you read this, we will have conducted our first-ever television press conference via satellite. Assuming everything held together, the event took place Jan. 24 between 12:45 and 1:30 EST. Fourteen farm broadcasters were on USDA's new teleconference bridge to ask questions of Sec'y Block. The questions and his answers were up on Westar IV, and a number of additional stations videotaped the event for their own use. We hope to do more of these, so if you do television, can access Westar IV and are interested in participating, let me know ... We talked briefly with Peggy Kay (WTAX, Springfield, IL) and she said she was eagerly looking forward to a trip to Australia and New Zealand in two weeks. She'll be the only media person in the tour group of 32 Illinois farm leaders, and the tour leader will be Illinois Director of Agriculture Larry Werries. All that summer weather south of the equator where the seasons are reversed does sound appealing, doesn't it? ... A number of you requested your free copies of the new Yearbook of Agriculture, "Animal Health: Livestock and Pets," since our last get together. Roy Isom (KMJ, Fresno, CA) added a note to his request, pointing out that he hopes to have time to peruse the book during the winter-time farm equipment shows. The first one is already history (Jan. 8), but there's another one coming up Feb. 12. In most parts of the country, that type activity probably wouldn't go over very well at this time of year ... John Stearns (Ag USA, Pacific Palisades, CA) added a note to his request, too. He reported that his nationally distributed show starts its 24th year on TV. He says 10,000 4-H Club members and Future Farmers of America have participated in the show, plus many of the top ag leaders, including five Secretaries of Agriculture. Give us the count when you hit 50 years, John ... Rob McCartney (NTV, Kearney, NE) called to say he is still looking for a farm reporter for NTV. If you're interested, call Rob at 308-743-2494 ... On the other side of the coin, Paul Klocek in Taylorville, IL is looking for a job as a farm director, because of change in policy at WTIM/WTJY-FM in Taylorville. You can contact him at 217-287-7789. It's an answering machine (sometimes), so be prepared ... We were watching the local TV news at home the other night and suddenly realized the anchorman had introduced a story as reported by Bryce Anderson. Yep, it was farm broadcaster Bryce at WOWT-TV, Omaha, NE. Good story.

FROM OUR RADIO  
SERVICE

AGRICULTURE USA #1443...(Weekly 13½ min documentary) Jim Johnson talks to USDA research leader John Gorham about how Biotechnology will influence our lives in the years to come.

AGRITAPE/FARM PROGRAM REPORT #1432...(Weekly reel of news features) USDA news highlights; U.S. customers becoming competitors; The electronic egg; Research to the people.

CONSUMER TIME #926...(Weekly reel of five 2½-3 min features) Chimney cleaning; Kerosene caution; Popular Chinese and Mexican vegetables; Seasoning with herbs; The avocado.

USDA RADIO NEWS SERVICE...Wed, Jan. 30, Crop values report; Thurs, Jan. 31, Ag Prices; Mon, Feb. 4, Dairy Products report; Tues, Feb. 5, Weekly crop and weather report. Dial the USDA National News Lines 202/488-8358 or 8359. All material changed at 5 p.m. EST each working day.



JAMES L. JOHNSON, Chief  
Radio and Television Division